



Marketing Public Relations

A Marketer's Approach to
Public Relations and Social Media

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Chapter 9

Selling the Story



Chapter Objectives

1. Discuss the concept and impact of “newsworthiness.”
2. Explain the goal and persuasive elements of the pitch.
3. Describe and explain the elements of a pitch letter.
4. Define and explain the concept of embargos and exclusives.
5. Discuss the special considerations for pitching a blogger.
6. Discuss the challenges of a live pitch.
7. Discuss how editorial calendars can impact a pitch.
8. Explain the importance of follow-up and observing follow-up protocol.
9. Discuss some tips for getting through the pitching process.

Pitch

- An attempt to persuade a journalist or other connector to cover a story



An Effective Pitch Must...

Establish credibility



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graph TD; A[Establish credibility] --> B[Build relationships]; B --> C[Be aligned with audience beliefs and values]; C --> D[Serve interests of connector]; D --> E[Be clear and concise];
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Build relationships

Be aligned with audience beliefs
and values

Serve interests of connector

Be clear and concise

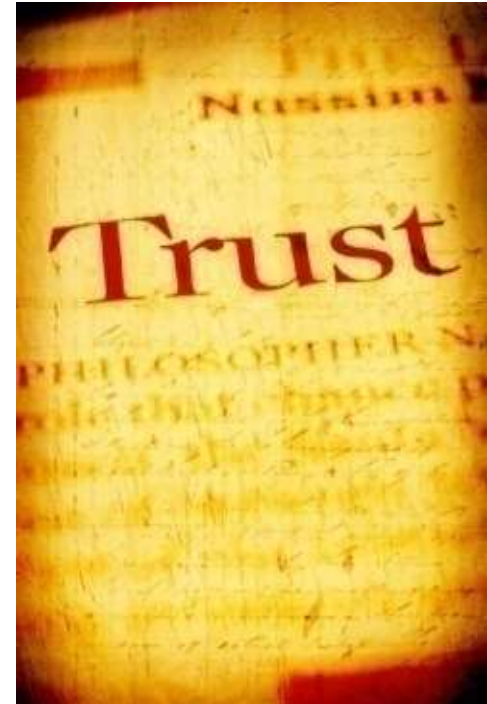
Newsworthy

- A subject that is interesting to a medium's audience, is objective, and will not make the media appear as though it has an ulterior motive for covering it



Balance Theory

- A communications theory that asserts that receivers feel uncomfortable, or out of balance, when their attitude toward the sender of a message does not match their attitude about the topic of the message



The Pitch Letter

- A letter, an e-mail, or another written document used to present a pitch
 - To pitch a story
 - Suggest an idea for a talk show segment
 - Secure an interview with a certain person about a specific topic
 - Position a person or an organization as an expert available for future comment
 - Explain why the accompanying press release or press kit is worth a few minutes of an editor's/producer's time.

The Opening

There are several recommended opening strategies you can use, such as the following:

1. Using a startling or little-known fact to catch attention is often effective. For example: “Did you know that if a barber commits a felony he can lose his barber’s license, but if you are convicted of a felony you can earn a barber’s license while in prison?”
2. Double entendres also work well. For instance: “Corporate sponsorship for ski team goes downhill.”
3. Following the style of Geico®, you could start with a question, such as “Did you know that a three-minute phone call could save a consumer hundreds of dollars?”

The Opening (continued)

4. Using intrigue is a great way to get connectors to read on. Be certain, however, that you deliver something truly interesting after setting an intriguing tone. For example: “The secret to a longer life may already be in your refrigerator.”
5. There is nothing wrong with cutting to the chase. Don’t be afraid to be straightforward with connectors and say something like: “We’ll be speaking to the local Rotary Club next week, and the topic we are speaking about will have a direct impact on your readers.”

B-roll footage

- Video footage produced by a firm and supplied to connectors in support of an MPR effort



Embargo

- Giving information about a story to a connector before the firm wants it released to allow the connector time to prepare his story



Exclusive

- Giving information about a story to a single connector in order to enhance the firm's coverage in that connector's medium



Pitching Bloggers

As Matt Clark of Lotus-PR says, “Blogger relations are very complex and new.” He offers the following keys to blogger relations:

- Make sure you do your research and have good reasons for picking your target blogs.
- Engage the bloggers by commenting on their posts and start a true conversation with them before adding them to a media list.
- Make sure the bloggers accept pitches, as many do not.
- Make sure it’s okay to e-mail them; some bloggers would rather be contacted through a basic contact form on their site.
- Never send a basic pitch template to them. Pitch letters to bloggers must be very personal.
- Look to extend your relationship beyond just getting a “hit.” If you cannot start a strong working relationship, remove bloggers who are not interested in covering your firm from your connector list.

Mining Editorial Calendars



1. Make a list of the publications that reach your best audiences/potential customers.
2. If you have a media research service or product—such as MediaMap (<http://www.mediamap.com>), LexisNexis (<http://www.lexisnexus.com>), or the like—the next step is easy. Enter your search terms—based on the topic you are pitching—and a list of opportunities will be shown on your computer screen.
3. Find the Web site for the publication you are targeting and search for the section “About Us” or “Media Kit.” If you’re very lucky, the site will include a section entitled “Editorial Calendar.”
4. Once you have located the editorial calendar, scan it for entries that are a match for your market focus, product, or service. Note the issue in which the story is scheduled to run and the deadline date for submitting information and/or materials for that story.

Mining Editorial Calendars (cont'd)

5. If the editorial contact does not appear on the editorial calendar, call the publication and ask to speak with someone in the Editorial Department who can assist you in identifying the correct writer or editor to contact. If you are not able to reach Editorial, try asking the person who answers the phone who the best contact might be. The people who answer the phone sometimes know more than you would expect and can be very helpful.
6. Repeat this process for each of your target publications until you have a list of all scheduled stories for the coming year with potential for your company's involvement.
7. You may find it easier to keep track of your editorial opportunities list if you enter all the information into a spreadsheet, such as Excel. You will easily be able to add, subtract, and sort opportunities as you act upon them.

Follow-up

1. Follow-up promptly after sending a press release or other material.
2. Keep following-up until you get a response.
3. If they say “no” or it’s a bad fit, go away!
4. Keep calls on message.
5. Be polite.
6. Be a resource.

Pitch Process Tips*

1. Don't bribe journalists.
2. If you're happy with the way a story turns out, don't send a gift thanking the reporter.
3. Strike the word *favor from your media relations vocabulary*.
4. Don't let your boss or colleagues tell you that they'll handle getting the media coverage if you're the one with the connections.
5. Don't believe that whatever you're doing is too important to disclose.
6. Don't miss a deadline.

*These are just a few of the tips from famed marketer/author Richard Laermer

Concept Case 9.1: Falcon's Lair

Making the Pitch

1. Discuss the pros and cons of each paragraph, and explain which one you feel is best.
2. Write your own paragraph and explain why it is better than any of the above.
3. Explain how you would use this letter to build credibility, relationship, and connection with beliefs, and communicate the benefit to the connector.
4. What support information would you include in this letter?



Reflection Questions

1. Discuss your view of newsworthiness, and cite some examples of subjects you think are and are not newsworthy.
2. Explain why an MPR professional might have different degrees of credibility with different connectors.
3. Discuss how the balance theory relates to a connector's relationship with a marketer and beliefs about a topic.
4. Describe the various reasons for using a pitch letter.
5. List and briefly describe all of the elements of a pitch letter.

Reflection Questions (continued)

6. Compare and contrast the purpose of embargos and exclusives.
7. Discuss the special considerations for pitching a blogger.
8. Explain the challenges of a live pitch.
9. If you had a story idea you believed to be ideal for a particular connector, but you did not see a reference to a similar subject on his or her editorial calendar, would you still pitch the idea to him or her? Explain why or why not.
10. Discuss the importance of following up on a pitch and the things a marketer should be aware of when doing so.



Practice Portfolio

- Write a pitch letter for each of the two press releases that you wrote for Chapter 8's Practice Portfolio. Using the connector list you created in Chapter 7, target a different connector for each letter.